



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Virtual fishing tournament encourages Iowa walleye anglers to report their catches

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is partnering for a third year with MyCatch by Angler's Atlas to conduct a statewide walleye fishing challenge starting March 30 through June 30.

This year's walleye challenge has been expanded to other states across the Midwest and into Canada as part of a larger fisheries research project funded by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

The Midwest Walleye Challenge uses the MyCatch mobile app to record the length of a fish. Participating anglers take a picture of the fish on a measuring device using the app. Once the fish is reviewed by the catch team and meets the rules, longest fish and most waterbodies fished entries appear on a live leaderboard.

The mobile app maintains anonymous location data, so anglers' secret spots stay secret. Iowa DNR fisheries biologists receive only generalized lake and river catch data entered to assess and manage walleye populations. Specific catch locations from anglers are not listed on public leaderboards.

Iowa anglers compete only against other Iowa anglers for biweekly prizes, while all catches from across the Midwest qualify for the grand prize drawings at the end of the event. Grand prizes for 2024 include a week-long fishing trip to Lac Seul Evergreen Lodge in Canada, as well as equipment from companies, such as St. Croix rods.

Anglers can register for the Midwest Walleye Challenge at <https://www.anglersatlas.com/event/767>. New this year, participants can choose the free entry option to qualify for non-cash prizes or pay a \$25 fee to qualify for all prizes including cash payouts.

Learn about the data collected the first two years of the walleye challenge and new incentives for this year's challenge online with the [DNR YouTube video](#).

Media Contact: Jeff Kopaska, Fisheries Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-204-8021.

Walleye season closes Feb. 15 on Iowa Great Lakes

SPIRIT LAKE – The walleye fishing season on Spirit, East and West Okoboji lakes is open through Feb. 14. It will close after that date and reopens on May 4. These are the only Iowa lakes that have a closed season for walleye.

For more information on fishing regulations, go to www.iowadnr.gov/fishing.

As other seasons close, hunters turn attention to coyotes

Coyote hunting moves to center stage for an estimated 10,000 hunters, after most of Iowa's other hunting seasons have now closed.

Although its season never closes, coyotes, the state's top predator, are hunted most often during the winter. The coyote population is distributed fairly well across the state with the highest numbers in western Iowa. Coyotes are habitat generalists and can be found near large brush piles, timber and grass fields, and in particular, fields with switchgrass.

Coyote hunters need to be aware of the possibility – however remote – that the animal they see through their scope is not a coyote but a wolf passing through the state.

"We've had a slight increase in the number of reported wolf sightings over the past few years, so there is a chance, even if it's small, that a coyote hunter may see a wolf while hunting coyotes, especially at night. Whenever we've been able to get DNA samples, these dispersing wolves were members of the Great Lakes population from Wisconsin or Minnesota that were wandering through," said Vince Evelsizer, state furbearer biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Wolves are protected in Iowa and there is no open season. Shooting a wolf has the potential to bring state and or federal fines.

"Hunters want to do the right thing. One of the first rules in safe hunting practices is to positively identify your target and what is behind your target before taking a shot. Wolves are two to three times the size of a coyote. If what you see is larger than the average coyote, it is definitely worth not pulling the trigger," said Colonel Craig Cutts, chief of the Iowa DNR's Law Enforcement Bureau.

Other than the obvious size difference – coyotes typically weigh 25-40 pounds, while wolves typically weigh 70-110 pounds – Evelsizer said there are other characteristics to help determine the identity of the canine.

Coyotes have a pointed snout and their ears are larger proportionally to their body. Wolves are taller than coyotes, have long front legs and a heavier, squarer frame.

There is more detailed information on coyote and wolf characteristics at www.iowadnr.gov/hunting and scroll to the bottom then click on Iowa's Occasional Wildlife Visitors.

Hunters prefer a fresh layer of snow for tracking and the white background makes coyotes easier to see from a long distance. Wind is critical to coyote hunters because it impacts where and how they set up for calling and pursuing coyotes as coyotes have a keen nose and are naturally wary. Wearing snow colored camo is often effective to avoid detection.

The demand for coyote fur for use as trim for hood and coats in foreign markets was strong just a few years ago, but that has changed. Iowa coyote pelts in 2020 averaged \$20.53 per pelt depending on the quality and Iowa's pelts are considered average. Last year's average price was \$8.70.

"The top pelts come from the Dakotas, Montana, and Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada," Evelsizer said.

"We receive complaints from the public about coyotes' impact on young deer, turkeys and rabbits; harass pets, and farmers' loss of livestock. So, in that respect, hunters provide an important service by hunting coyotes," Cutts said. "That being said, they're a very wary game animal worthy of respect. We don't allow the use of artificial light for night hunting on purpose because we encourage fair chase and it could increase the incentive to misuse the technology to poach deer and other wildlife."

Coyote trapping is allowed, but it must be done during the trapping season.

Coyote hunting dos & don'ts

Hunters are reminded that the way they hunt reflects on all hunters.

"With our coyote hunters, we especially want to emphasize respect for landowners and their property lines. Take the extra time to close their gates, obey the laws for safe shots, and thank the landowner – keep your interaction with folks while out hunting positive," Cutts said.

Most coyote hunting takes place on private land, and occasionally hunters will cross property boundaries which lead to trespassing complaints. Hunters cannot pursue coyotes using a snowmobile, aircraft or with the aid of artificial light, regardless of light color.

- Be sure to close all gates that were opened, not trespass where permission was not given and to follow fair chase principles
- Don't shoot over any road right-of-way, gravel or paved
- If running dogs, be sure to have permission from all landowners in the area where the hunt will take place
- Be sure of the target – make sure it's a coyote and not a dog

Media Contact: Vince Evelsizer, Furbearer Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-357-3517.

Registration open for Chronic Wasting Disease Ambassadors course in Woodbury County

SIoux CITY - Chronic Wasting Disease Ambassadors is a collaborative education program between the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach that seeks to help Iowans address the challenge of chronic wasting disease.

Registration is open for a course in March at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, in Woodbury County. Classes are scheduled for March 12, 19, and 26, from 6-8 p.m. The course is free and meals are provided at each meeting.

Participants can include hunters and non-hunters, community members, and anyone interested in white-tailed deer conservation and management. Anyone interested in learning more about the disease and its management are encouraged to attend.

The goal of the program is to develop a small, connected, and well-educated network of local leaders to effectively communicate about the management and mitigation of chronic wasting disease.

Graduates of the three-week training program become “ambassadors” for the science-based management of chronic wasting disease. Ambassadors are knowledgeable in the management, prevention, and testing for the disease and equipped with communication skills and resources to help educate others within their community.

Jordan Koos, of Decorah, is a deer hunter who took the training offered in Waukon in November 2021.

“It was a well-developed program, and having only a handful of participants, helped to carry it,” he said. “I learned a lot; didn’t realize the number of counties it was in or the number of positives. I would recommend it.”

The course is taught through in-person instructions, demonstration, and networking, and short online lessons between class sessions that allow ambassadors to learn at their own pace. It covers everything from the basics of chronic wasting disease ecology to the science of effective communication. The program comprises about eight hours of learning and networking with ISU and DNR educators and other concerned community members.

To register, visit: https://iastate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8xfXQ19yeuGz0t8

Ice fishing shelters must be removed by Feb. 20

DES MOINES – Ice fishing shelters, left unattended, must be removed from state-owned lands and waters, including parking lots and boat ramps by Feb. 20.

Ice fishing shelter owners who camp in their shelter can remain on state-owned land past the Feb. 20 deadline if they pay for a campsite in a state park campground.

Ice fishing shelter owners are encouraged not to wait until the last minute to get their shelter off the ice. If a shelter falls through the ice, the owner is responsible for getting it out of the lake.